



Sign and Façade Design Guidelines

City of Somerville

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Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development

Acknowledgements

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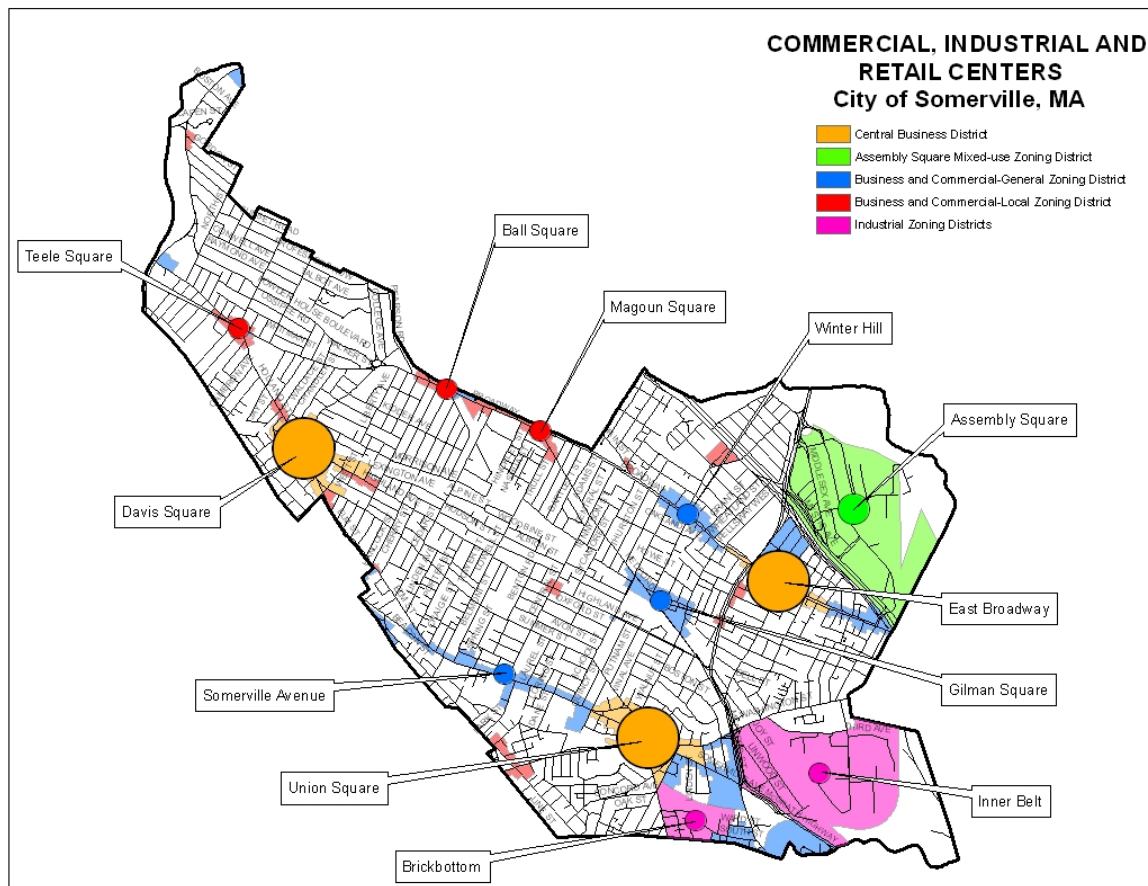
Introduction

Somerville is an eclectic mix of blue-collar families, young professionals, college students and recent immigrants. Somerville is defined by its vibrant and multi-cultural city squares, which help mark neighborhood boundaries while also featuring bustling businesses and entertainment centers. Among the most active today are Davis Square, Union Square, Ball Square, East Somerville, Teele Square, and Magoun Square. Each offers a mix of ethnic restaurants, bars and shops and small businesses to fit every taste and occasion.

What are design guidelines, whom are they for?

One goal of the City of Somerville is to maintain and improve the quality of life for Somerville residents by actively promoting and supporting economically viable and sustainable commercial districts. Through the Sign and Façade Design Guidelines, the City is interested in address aesthetic issues that business and property owners face in planning commercial and retail improvements.

By establishing these guidelines, the City encourages important element design to support healthy commercial areas through storefront design and building maintenance. In general, it is intended to recommend ideas, stimulate thinking and promote good design, beautification and urban revitalization. In doing so, the qualities, characteristics, and architectural style of the buildings establish the personality of the commercial area, and this attracts customers and helps sustain a strong merchant base.



Several important public and private objectives are encouraged by these guidelines. The Sign and Façade Design Guidelines:

- Provide consistent design elements to improve the quality of physical improvements to central business districts and commercial corridors.
- Improve the quality of the pedestrian experience by providing a pleasant shopping experience for business premises.
- Stimulate economic development for business and property owners.
- Promote community awareness of the physical environment.
- Preserve the historical and architectural resources of the City.
- Provide for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City.



Diversity but consistency makes for a very interesting commercial corridor / business district.



A successful downtown design improvement program should manage visual change constructively, building on existing physical assets and encouraging innovation that supports them



Downtown's distinct elements are its advantages in economic revitalization



Proper design helps to create a vibrant spot that increase pedestrian and economic activity.

Somerville's central business districts play a crucial role in developing a strong business community. The Business Initiative, managed through the Economic Development Department, strives to work with small business owners in an effort to grow, diversify and maintain vibrant central business districts city-wide. Some business assistance programs involve:

- Developing a vacant property database (lease finder) for retail/office/industrial space.
- Funding information through the Somerville 4 Business Initiative. For more details visit <http://www.open4business.us/somerville>
- Managing the Storefront Improvement Program, a matching grant to fostering
- Fostering communication between businesses and the surroundings neighborhoods
- A partnership with ACCION, a leader microfinancing organization.
- Providing a series of seminars / workshops to local aspiring entrepreneurs and existing businesses
- Integrating efforts between business communities to create a strong commercial base city-wide.
- Working with local organizations to promote a friendly business environment

For more information on these programs, please contact David Guzman at 617.625.6600 x2546 or dguzman@somervillema.gov

The Storefront and its elements

Storefronts buildings are the basic units of downtown commercial areas. They play an integral part in any neighborhood or commercial area as they serve to visually unify and provide consistency within a business district. Its design and use are crucial to advertising and merchandising policies. The storefront is the street level portion of the building façade and is the most important architectural part of commercial buildings since customers tend to focus their attention on this part of the building first.

The storefront is composed of several elements. Each element goes beyond their importance to the composition of individual buildings. This brings the whole streetscape visual cohesiveness and creates a physical rhythm that provides orientation to pedestrians. Attention to design and detail can be a good investment for the property owner and the community. Understanding the elements that comprises a storefront will assist with communicating with designers about renovations and improvements and aid in understanding the City of Somerville's design guidelines.



In improving the image of a commercial area an understanding of the typical buildings in the district is important, are often the first visible signs that something positive is happening, signaling to the community that exciting changes are taking place downtown. It is vital to recognize that the storefront and other exterior changes affect both the individual buildings and the overall streetscape. Renovations that enhance and enrich the streetscape can stabilize and strengthen property values. But design improvements alone will not reverse economic decline; they must be complemented by business development activities, aggressive marketing and the structure provided by several key players capable of coordinating the many steps involved in the downtown revitalization process.

Façade features: General Guidelines

Façades constitute the heart of a storefront. Is often me most important from a design standpoint, as it sets the tone for the rest of the building. The section as follows provides specific design guidelines for building façade as well as important details and features of a storefront and intends to help create an identity for your storefront while respecting the needs of the business district. Creativity, good design and innovation are encouraged, so that you have the best possible result from your efforts.



Sign Light

Trim / Frieze

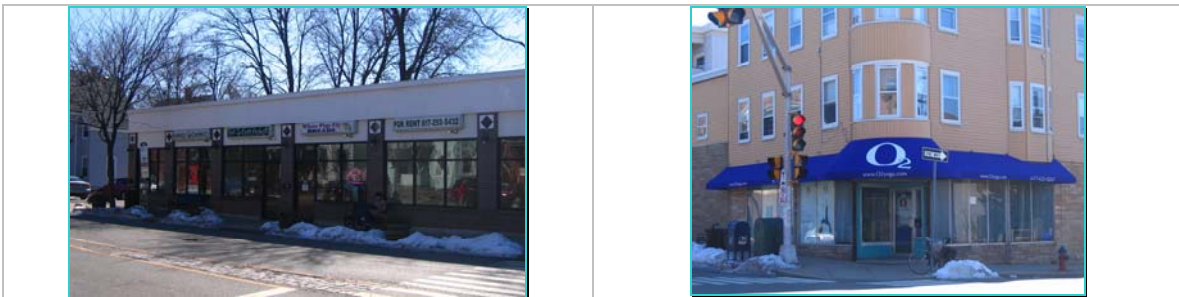
Sign Band

Transom Window

Window Base

Parts of a storefront.

The character of storefronts and windows displays, as well as the quality of the streetscape experience, defines the feel of a neighborhood. It is to the advantage of every member of the community to promote the desired qualities of the district, thereby giving urban revitalization.



A pleasant/vibrant commercial corridor will encourage window shopping and help draw customers

Specific Building Façade Features

Objective: Provide design guidelines for the of the storefront facade



Before

After

Improvements in storefront designs are often the first visible signs that something positive is happening, signaling to the community that exciting changes are taking place downtown.

Recommended

- Respect, maintain and preserve existing architectural details around the façade. Renovations should be compatible with the building's features to help preserve the character, history, and surrounding area.
- Use as similar materials as you can get in order to preserve and restore historical features. Replacement materials should match originals as closely as possible.
- Create a cohesive storefront appearance by aligning window heights and unifying window sizes.
- Using white lighting to accentuate the architectural features of the building.
- Determine the original condition of the building by detailed examination of the context of your building in the surrounding streetscape – ask yourself, “how does my particular building work in the street?”



Alterations incompatible in scale, size, material and color. Windows blocked, sign and awning covering architectural details.

Not Recommended

- Covering any part of the building façade with aluminum, stucco, false-brick veneer, or any other material that will obscure openings or detailing.
- Filing in windows or doors with any material; or blocking it.
- Removing existing quality materials and historic features details from a building.
- Alteration incompatible in scale, size, material, or color.

Note: Consider the Designs Guidelines for Business Zones in the Somerville Zoning Ordinance for specific requirements.

Technical guidelines

A. Design Guidelines for Business Zones

The following guidelines are intended to promote certain urban design principles and physical building characteristics within business districts. These guidelines are not intended to discourage innovative architectural design solutions. Rather, they provide general standards for the massing, sitting and articulation of buildings for developers and architects to work from. They also provide parameters for dialogue between the Applicant and Special Permit Granting Authority on design issues. The guidelines are particularly applicable to smaller and infill sites within a streetscape, while for larger buildings on highly visible sites (especially those directly facing on major squares) they are intended as a beginning basis upon which the SPGA will judge proposals.

1. Maintain a strong building presence along the primary street edge, continuing the established streetwall across the front of the site so as to retain the streetscape continuity; however, yards and setbacks as required by Article 8 shall be maintained.
2. Differentiate building entrances from the rest of the primary street elevation, preferably by recessing the entry from the plane of the streetwall or by some other articulation of the
3. elevation at the entrance.
4. Make use of the typical bay widths, rhythms and dimensions prevalent in buildings adjacent to the site, especially in new construction or substantial redevelopment.
5. Clearly define these bay widths, rhythms and dimensions, making them understandable through material patterns, articulations and modulations of the facades, mullion design and treatment, etc.
6. Provide roof types and slopes similar to those of existing buildings in the area.
7. Use materials and colors consistent with those dominant in the area or, in the case of a rehabilitation or addition, consistent with the architectural style and period of the existing building. Use of brick masonry is encouraged, but not considered mandatory.
8. When parking lots are provided between buildings, abutting the primary street and breaking the streetwall, provide a strong design element to continue the streetwall definition across the site, such as a low brick wall, iron works or railing, trees, etc.
9. Locate transformers, heating and cooling systems, antennae, and the like, so they are not visible from the street; this may be accomplished, for example, by placing them behind the building, within enclosures, behind screening, etc.
10. Sites and buildings should comply with any guidelines set forth in Article 6 of this Ordinance for the specific base or overlay zoning district(s) the site is located within.

Entrance: Doors

The front door is the first and possibly only part of the shop that will actually be touched and felt by the customers. The door provides a tactile contact and should represent the image of the building and the shop. The original solid door design with raised panels and a glass vision panel may better represent the shop than aluminum framed glass doors.

Entries are best recessed and must comply with all zoning and accessibility requirements. Recessed entries serve as sheltered areas that protect customer from the weather and prevent doors from swinging onto sidewalks.



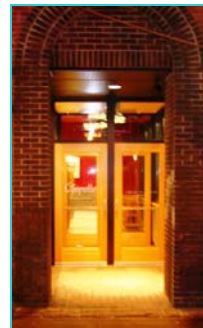
Proper doors provide a sense of welcome.



Doors compatible with a building overall character.



Creative entrance



Visible entries located on the main street.

Doors

Objective: Make entrances obvious and welcoming.



Designs improvements enhance the appearance of the downtown and make it a more appealing place for consumers.

Recommended

- Use glass doors – it is easy to the customers to see what is inside the store
- Select a door compatible in scales, material and shape with the overall façade.
- Provide a sense of welcome from the exterior to the interior.



An Opaque door makes the space feel unsafe and unwelcoming. A pulled back entrance creates an unusable space

Not recommended

- Using doors that are opaque or that include no glass. Avoid residential door for commercial entrances.
- Pulling back the entrance from the building façade.
- Storing inventory behind one door of a double door entrance.
- Closing a part of an entrance or making the entrance door smaller than the original door.

ADA Access

Objective: Incorporate ADA access as an overall part of the entrance sequence

Recommended



- Implement improvements according to the ADA standards for Handicapped Accessibility.
- Work with adjacent stores to coordinate shared ramps or stairs.
- Access for persons with disabilities is required by State Law.

Not recommended



Entrances should not be crowded with merchandise or plants

- Use of slippery materials on walking surfaces.
- Making entrances complicated or difficult to get through by crowding them with merchandise.

Signage

Signage is a very important element of storefront design, and should be designed to complement the architectural integrity of the façade and fit within architecturally allotted space. Commercial sign often reflect the economic vitality of an area and improper sign maintenance /treatment not only degrades the image of the store but also erodes the value of the surrounding area.

Properly signs are necessary in order to preserve and enhance the substantial interest of the City in its natural, scenic, historic, cultural and aesthetic qualities; and improve the city's appearance, thereby attracting both permanent residents and commercial development. "Bigger an more" is not always the best strategy; an automobile passenger can only perceive an average of four words or symbols on a storefront, and this number decreases according to the total amount of signage on adjacent buildings.



Sign design, building form, colors integrated



Signs maintain an existing "signage line" and respect the colors and style of adjacent signs and awnings.







Sign letters and colors complement building architecture.



A simple design that caught attention.

Note: City of Somerville's Zoning Ordinance define the size, type and placement of signs, dimensions of projecting signs, and the amount of window area than can be cover by signs.

Signage

Objective: Attract attention and convey information identifying the business or services offered within.	
	<u>Recommended</u>
 <p><i>Sign conveys business with interesting logos, not excessive wording.</i></p>  <p><i>Simple and creative signage produces beautification of the business area</i></p>  <p><i>A Creative sign.</i></p>  <p><i>Sign within the original space of the sign band.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance important architectural details not concealed or obliterate them • Signs should complement the building's design, style, color and materials. • On a multiple-storefront building, signage should be compatible in character, scale, and locations. There's no need to be identical by adjacent facades stores. • Type styles should enhance readability of the sign and provide information simply and legibly, should be limited to advertising the business name and its main good and services, we encourage not advertise national brand names or logos. • A simple sign design is preferred. A sign should be subordinate to the overall building composition.

Signage

	<u>Not Recommended</u>
<div data-bbox="197 477 1050 938"></div> <p data-bbox="331 987 928 1011"><i>Too many signs with too much information result in visual clutter</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Covering architectural details or building elements such as windows and cornices with signs.• Using long, complicated messages with too much information.• Excessive use of windows sign.• Signs too large for the scale of the building.• Large, interior-lit signs.• “Cookie-cutter” lettering when multiple adjacent businesses are involved.• Neon “open” signs.• Overly bright signs.• Over-size signs or signs that occupy more than 40% of the window area.

Technical Guidelines

The following technical guidelines were extracted from the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Somerville, Article 12, section 12.4 which regulates signage in Nonresidential Districts. For more information, see the Zoning Ordinance available in the City's website or the Planning Department.

Section 12.4. Signs in Nonresidential Districts.

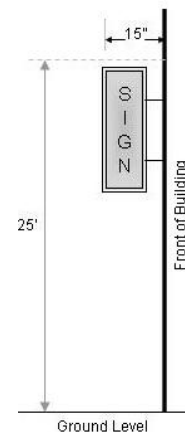
12.4.1. Requirements.

In districts other than residence districts, signs are permitted provided that they shall conform to the requirements of subsections (a) through (h):

- a. Any sign which conforms to the requirements of Section 12.3; (*Refer to Zoning Ordinance of City of Somerville*).

- b. A wall sign attached parallel to a building which project no more than fifteen (15) inches from the building surface, provided that the top of such sign is no higher than whichever of the following is lowest:

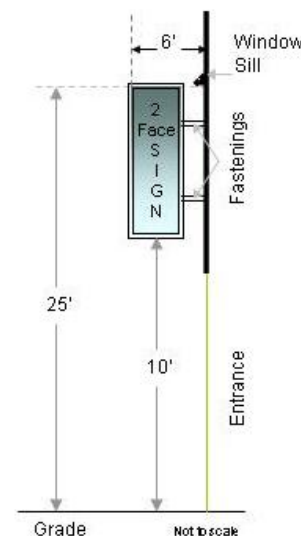
- (1) Twenty-five (25) feet above grade;
- (2) The top of the sills of the first level of windows above the first story;
- (3) The lowest point of the roof surface except in the case of a one-story building with a continuous horizontal parapet, the top of said parapet.



- c. A permanent non-illuminated sign on the inside of the glass of a window, provided that the total area of the sign does not exceed thirty (30) percent of the total glass area of the windows of the building, or portion, thereof, where the sign is located, and provided that signs on ground floor windows be included in calculating the total area of signs on a sign frontage.

- d. A sign attached at right angles to a building, provided that such sign has no more than two (2) faces and:

- (1) There is no more than one (1) such sign for each entrance door;
- (2) It projects no more than six (6) feet, plus a reasonable allowance for field fastening, from the building;
- (3) The bottom of the sign is at least ten (10) feet from the grade and its top is no higher than whichever of the following is lowest: twenty five (25) feet above grade; the top of the sills of the first level of windows above the first story; or the lowest point of the roof surface, except in the case of a one-story building with a continuous horizontal parapet, the top of said parapet;
- (4) The area of the sign shall not exceed twenty-four (24) feet on either side, excepting that an additional ten (10) feet on each face is allowed for a sign incorporates a public service message device such as a time and temperature sign;



-
-
- (5) There are no exposed guy wires or turnbuckles.
- e. One (1) free-standing sign, provided that such sign has no more than two (2) faces and;
- (1) If there is one (1) use on the premises, the area of each face may not exceed sixty-five (65) square feet and the top of such sign may not be higher than twenty-five (25) feet above; or
- (2) If there are two (2) or more uses on the premises, the area of each face may not exceed one hundred twenty-five (25) square feet and the top of such sign may not exceed thirty (30) feet above grade; excepting, however, that a premises with a street line or lines of two hundred (200) or more feet may have two (2) free-standing signs, or a single sign which is two (2) times the area otherwise permitted.
- f. Temporary signs pertaining to special sales or events may be affixed to windows provided that their total area does not exceed thirty (30) percent of the window area and provided that any such sign may not be posted more than thirty (30) days. No permit is required for any such temporary sign which is posted fifteen (15) days or less.
- g. A sign painted on or attached to the face of, but not extending above, a canopy or marquee, or a sign attached to the underside of a canopy or marquee.
- h. A sign painted on or attached to an awning.

12.4.2. Lighting.

Signs shall be lighted only by any continuous light, except that a warning sign or a sign illuminated to show time and temperature, or some other public service message, may have intermittent illumination. Signs shall remain stationary.

12.4.3. Support.

No support for a sign shall extend above the cornice line of a building to which it is attached.

12.4.4. Calculation of Sign Area.

The area of signs shall be determined as follows:

- a. For a sign, either free-standing or attached, the area shall be considered to include all lettering, wording, and accompanying designs and symbols, together with the background, whether open or enclosed on which they are displayed, but not including any supporting framework and bracing which are incidental to the display itself.
- b. For a sign painted upon or applied to a building, the area shall be considered to include all lettering, wording, and accompanying designs or symbols together with any backing of a different color than the finish material or the building face.
- c. Where the sign consists of individual letters or symbols attached to or painted on a surface, building, wall or window, the area shall be considered to be that of the smallest rectangle or other geometric shape which encompasses all of the letters and symbols.
- d. In calculating the permitted sign area, the sign frontage shall be understood to mean the length of a building along a public way occupied by a separate and distinct use or that length of a building that is set back from, but facing a public way where such a sign would be highly visible. The total area in square feet of all permanent signs on a sign frontage, except for signs on windows above the first floor, free-standing signs, directional and public purpose signs shall not exceed sign frontage multiplied by the appropriate factor from the table below.

Average Distance of Sign (in feet) Centerline of Abutting Street	Sign Frontage Multiplied By
0-99	2
100-399	3
400 and over	5

Excepting that a use with less than twenty-five feet of sign frontage may have a maximum of fifty (50) square feet of permanent signs.

- a. The distance of a sign on or under a canopy, marquee or awning from the centerline of an abutting street shall be constructed to be the same as if such sign were attached to the building to which the said canopy, marquee or awning is attached.



362 Medford



17 Holland St.



65 Holland St.



378 Highland Ave.

Creative signs from Somerville's spots

Awnings

An awning is an architectural projection that provides weather protection, identity or decoration and is wholly supported by the building to which it is attached. Property Awnings are a valuable contribution to the streetscape, the pedestrians and the shop owner for their color, protection and changeable variety.

Even though may appear temporary in nature, they can affect the overall image of the building. Proper maintenance and repair of awnings are important in convey a positive visual image.

Note: the Massachusetts State Building Code requires projections over a sidewalk be at least 7'-0" above the sidewalk. Awning valences, if unfixed, should be a minimum of 6'-9" above the sidewalk. Fixed awnings may project no more than 4'-0" from the building, retractable awnings must be at least 1'-0" from the edge of the curb.



Traditional with straight valance



Dome



Traditional with sign band



Slant face



Awning covering architectural details



Awnings

Objective: Add an exterior building element that serves a practical purpose and enhances a store's appearance, if appropriate for your building.

Recommended



Store awnings maintain an existing "awning line" and respect the colors and style of adjacent signs and awnings

- Enhance architectural details not obscure or obliterate them
- Complement the building's design, style, color and materials
- Use awnings that have a simple shape, locate the awning where it respects an existing sign or awning line established by adjacent stores
- Use awnings to create pleasant shaded spaces in front of a building
- Creative awning shapes must be carefully designed and coordinated with the overall appearance of the building.

Not recommended



Vinyl or plastic materials are not appropriate for storefronts. Awning covering architectural detail.

- Covering architectural details with continuous awnings or oversized awnings.
- Use of back-lit or internally lit awnings
- Brand names, such as -- should not be advertised on the sign or awning
- Any visible or moving parts or consist of flashing or animated lighting
- Excessive signage
- Vinyl or plastic materials

Windows



Windows are an important design feature of any structure; they establish a unique relationship between the customer and the store as they visually communicate the interior of the store to passing customers. The window base supports and protects the display window from the damage and weathering. Typical materials include wood, marble, brick, concrete, and ceramic tiles.

Exterior changes to storefronts affect both the individual building and the overall streetscape.

Windows: Materials, Sizes and Maintenance

Objective: Attract attention and interest into the products or services within.

Recommended



Large expanses of glass in the ground-floor façade allow pedestrians to look into shops and see displayed merchandise.

- Preserve the original size, division and shape of windows where possible.
- Create a uniform/cohesive storefront appearance by aligning window heights and unifying window sizes with adjacent storefronts in a building.
- Retain or increase window transparency wherever possible
- Retain the original pattern of transom windows

Not Recommended



Closing up transom windows make the building look abandoned. Windows size changed

- Blocking, reducing the size or changing the design of windows relative to the proportions of the original building or the base height of adjacent storefronts.
- Use Plexiglas or other replacement materials.
- Avoid installing opaque panels such as metal, wood and or other materials to replace glass windows
- Eliminate the windows base.

Windows: Lighting

Objective: Attract attention and interest into the products or services within.

Recommended



Proper lighting should encourage a shopping environment drawing attention to window itself

- Use exterior lighting to draw attention to window displays, signs, store information and a building's architectural details.
- Use exterior fixtures that complement the entire façade.
- Keep window displays well lit, especially indirect white light even after business hours.
- Direct lighting continuously onto the display itself.
- Maintain lighting in good working condition.
- Holiday lighting is allowed for no more than a 4-weeks consecutive period.

Not recommended





Flashing or intermittent lighting compete with the building architecture

- No direct light should glare or shine onto the street or nearby property.
- Don't attract attention to the light itself.
- Flashing, animated or intermittent lighting.
- Use of neon lighting in a storefront.

Windows: Displays

Stimulate interest in new products or services. Display windows are the link between the pedestrian and the business. They are the character-defining element of retail or commercial building and their original size, division, and shape should be preserved where possible.

	<u>Recommended</u>
 <p><i>Interesting window display</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use windows to display merchandise by using the full extent of the glass. • Make the display exciting, fun and original. Retain or increase window transparency wherever possible. • Change and clean constantly the display window often to keep the passerby interested and to continually draw in the potential customer. • Create a cohesive storefront appearance by aligning window heights and unifying window sizes. • We encourage identifying, preserving, retaining and maintaining the original size, division and shape of windows where possible. Align window heights and unifying window sizes. • Fix broken windows immediately. Broken or boarded windows negatively impact business and the district
	<u>Not Recommended</u>
 <p><i>A cluttered window makes the entire store seem disorganized and unattractive to shoppers.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cluttering window displays with too much merchandise or disorganized displays that prevent customers and pedestrians from seeing inside the store. • Use of window display space as storage • Keeping display windows empty • Covering or blocking a display window, or filling the opening with non-transparent material. • Change the pattern or size of original storefront openings through Use of Plexiglas or other replacement materials is not acceptable. Avoid installing opaque panels such as metal, wood, and/or other materials to replace glass windows. Removal or replacement of windows.

Note: Massachusetts State Building Code requires all glazing adjacent to sidewalks be tempered safety glass.

Colors

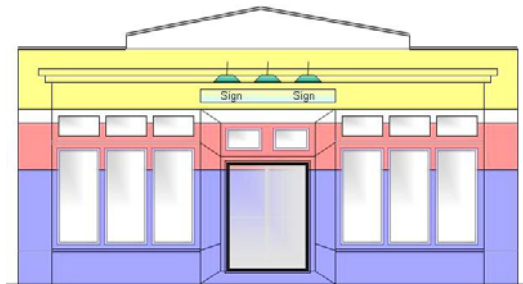
Objective: Convey the identity and attitude of a store.



Appropriate combination of colors give identity to these storefronts

Recommended

- Color should be considered in the context of the entire streetscape.
- Color should be used to bring together the elements of the entire façade, from the cornice to the entrance door.
- Color scheme should complement, respond to and enhance the architectural and historic character of a building.
- Use colors consistent with those dominant in the area or with the architectural style and period of the existing building.



Too many colors make this façade look haphazard and unappealing.

Not Recommended

- Using more than 3 colors.
- Using bright, non-traditional colors
- Painting arbitrary decorative lines, bands or graphics directly on the façade if not related to buildings character or detailing.

Maintenance

Maintenance is a first step in the improvement of existing buildings and in changing the appearance of a neighborhood and business district.

Objective: Convey the identity and attitude of a store.

Recommend



- Maintain easy access for customers
- Windows and signs should be cleaned permanently
- Repainting woodwork, cleaning signs, and awnings, repainting brickwork and replacing burnt out on an on-going basis
- When a change in business occupancy results, it is encouraged to repaint or repair to match the rest of the façade
- When undergoing a renovation process materials should be chosen with durability in mind.

Examples of lack of maintenance

Not Recommended



- Failing to provide adequate protection of materials on a cyclical basis so that deterioration of storefront features results.
- Failing to undertake adequate measures to assure the preservation of the historic storefront.

NOTE: A list of regulatory agencies and available documents is at the Review Process and City Approval section. Before you make any improvement on your storefront, make sure you are in accordance with local, State and Federal regulations. For further information, contact the Economic Development Department at the 617.625.6600 x2546.

Landscaping / Planting

Objective: Strengthen the appeal of your business and the character of the commercial corridor



A pleasant corridors stimulates pedestrian activity

Recommended

- Use plants and trees that are native to the area and easily maintained.
- Use flower boxes at windows and plant containers at entrances.
- Use plant containers that are sturdy and stable so they cannot be easily tipped or blown over.
- Keep plants suitably watered and pruned.



Not Recommended

- Avoid exotic landscaping that will not survive the climate conditions.
- Breaking the continuity of the sidewalk by placing plant containers in high pedestrian traffic areas of a sidewalk.

Technical guidelines

Section 10.6. Landscaping Specifications.

10.6.1 General.

Plantings selected shall have a natural height and mature size which do not encroach upon, obstruct, or endanger vehicular and pedestrian traffic on adjacent public ways. Plants shall not be pruned except for sound horticultural reasons and following sound horticultural practices, by a certified horticulturist, or where law dictates.

In order to protect plantings from traffic, de-icing salts, and snow plowing operations, landscaped areas with tree or shrub plantings within six (6) feet of a paved vehicle parking area or accessway shall be raised above such areas by use of curbing or edging six inches or higher above the finished pavement.

Street tree plantings shall not be subject to this strict requirement, provided that a grate is furnished for each such tree and that the tree is planted in accordance with the provisions of Section 10.6.2 and in a manner satisfactory to the Superintendent.

All plants shall be guaranteed for survival for one (1) year from planting. During this period, each plant shall show at least 75% healthy growth and shall have the natural characteristic of the plant of its species in accordance with the standards of the American Nurserymen's Association. Any plant judged dead or unsatisfactory by the Superintendent shall be replaced until it has lived through one (1) year. Additionally, all plant material living beyond the one (1) year guarantee period shall be maintained in a healthy condition.

The Storefront Improvement Program

The City of Somerville offers financial assistance and design guidance to business and retail property owners through the Storefront Improvement Program (SIP). This program exists to keep our local business districts vital and to set a design standard for retail shops in Somerville.

Eligible improvements for SIP projects include repair of masonry or wood exteriors, new signs, windows, doors, lighting, awnings, new ADA-compliant entryways and general repair of the exterior storefront visible from the public way. Maintenance and general upkeep are not eligible for funding.

Through the SIP, property owners or their tenants may be eligible for a 50% matching grant toward storefront renovation costs. The 50% rebate is used toward construction costs of a renovation and may also be used toward the architect's fees. The total rebate to the participant cannot exceed \$35,000 toward construction renovation costs, and \$5,000 for the Sign/Lighting/Awning program.

To do so, there are several important steps that must be taken and processes followed. Following are a few important items for you to take into account:

1. Applicant meets with the Program Coordinator.
2. Applicant completes and files a SIP application with the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development.
3. The applicant must provide the City with 3 quotes for the work and pictures of the storefront. (It is not sufficient to just get cost information from one contractor.) The quote will need to include materials and labor. The City will only provide reimbursement for 1/2 of the lowest quote. The applicant can choose whichever contractor they wish to do business with. All quotes and all work done must include Davis Bacon wage rates. The program coordinator will provide prevailing wages.

To be eligible for either program, business owners must either be in a HUD-eligible area (The area broadly defined as “eligible” consists primarily of Union Square, Boynton Yards, Brickbottom and much of East Somerville); have five or fewer employees, including the proprietor; or creating new jobs. To determine your business' eligibility, please contact the Program Coordinator at the **Major's** Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development at (617)625 - 6600 x2546.

Illustrated cases

The following examples were selected as significant landmark buildings in the city of Somerville and each presents building features that could be well promoted for good business attention. In both cases, the basic building appears to be in good condition and only modest cosmetic improvements are required. The proposal in each case is to restore the traditional elements of the building façade that may have been in the original design.



Review process and City Approval

Reviewing this guide is only the first step in making storefront façade improvements in Somerville. Depending on the improvements you may want to do, other City approvals may be needed. Contact the Mayors office of Strategic Planning and Community Development at 617.625.660 ext 2546 or local Main Streets organizations for advisory through the process, or go to www.somervillema.gov.

Regulatory agencies and documents

Project must comply with all city zoning ordinance for signage, property use, parking and new construction, as well as all Massachusetts State Building Codes and federal guidelines for accessibility. The following Departments may have information useful to you:

<u>Agencies</u>	
Inspectional Services Dept. (ISD)	Administers awning permits, sidewalk use permits. Review plans submitted to ensure proposed construction meets all City Ordinances and State Regulations. Superintendent, George Landers Department of Public Work, 1 Franey Road, 1st Floor 8:00-10:00am & 3:00-3:45pm Monday-Friday 617-625-6600 ext. 5600

<u>Documents</u>	
Somerville Zoning Ordinance	The Zoning Ordinance regulate the planning of use, lot size, building location and bulk, parking, open space, and developments. http://www.somervillema.gov/Department.cfm?dept=CLERK
Massachusetts State Building Code (780 CMR)	The Code should be consulted for all matters affecting or relating to buildings and structures. Provisions to the code address building construction, alteration, or repair as a means of insuring public safety, health and welfare. http://www.mass.gov
Federal ADA and Chapter 521 CMR	The Federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Chapter 521 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations, administered by the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board, of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance provide regulation regarding handicapped accessibility requirements. These regulations apply to al new construction and renovation of existing structures.

	<p>http://www.sec.state.ma.us/spr/sprcat/agencies/521.htm Chapter 521 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations</p> <p>http://www.ada.gov/ American with Disabilities website</p>
Historic Buildings and Landmarks Districts	<p>Buildings with historic designation or those in an eligible district must comply with the requirement of the Historic Preservation Commission. When receiving public funding, projects are subject to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for rehabilitating Historic Buildings (U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Parks Service, Preservation Assistance Division).</p> <p>Illustrated guidelines for Rehabilitating Historical Buildings, The Secretary's of Interior Guidelines for Rehabilitation</p> <p>http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/rhb/index.htm</p>

Useful Resources

American with Disabilities Act ADA requirements
<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm>

Union Square Main Streets
<http://www.unionsquaremain.org/>

East Somerville Main Streets
<http://www.eastsomervillemainstreets.org/>

National Trust for Historic Preservation
<http://www.mainstreet.org/>

Definitions

Access

The ability of persons to enter and leave property as pedestrians and/or as occupants of a vehicle.

Alteration

As applied to a building or structure, a change or rearrangement in the exterior structural parts or in the exit facilities; also an enlargement or addition where new construction is connected to an existing structure, whether by extending on a side or by increasing in height, or the moving from one (1) location or position to another.

Awning

A roof-like covering, such as canvas, affixed to a frame and attached to a building for use as a shelter from rain or sun.

Building

Any structure, either temporary or permanent, having a roof or other covering, and designed or used for the shelter or enclosure of any person, animal or property of any kind, including tents, awnings or vehicles situated on private property and used for purposes of a building. The word "building" shall be construed where the context allows as though followed by the words "or parts thereof."

Business (Commercial)

The occupancy, use or intended use of land or structures or any portion thereof for the transaction of commerce, principally retail and/or wholesale trade, but also including the rendering or receiving of professional services.

Elevation

Height relative to mean sea level.

Landscaping

The improvement of land, generally for use as passive outdoor space, through the planting and maintenance of live plants including trees, shrubs, ground cover, flowers, or other, lowgrowing plants that are native or adaptable to the urban climatic conditions of Somerville. In addition, the term landscaping may include some natural or manufactured materials including, but not limited to, reflecting pools, works of art, walkways, screens, walls, fences, benches and other types of landscape or street furniture. Landscaping may also include other non-living materials used as components of a plan for improving outdoor space, such as rocks, pebbles, sand, bark mulch, landscape pavers, earthen mounds and the like, but excluding curbing and pavement for vehicular use.

Premises

The place of business of an enterprise or institution, limited to that parcel or part of land, buildings or structures actually occupied by said business.

Retail

As applied to use, business establishments selling goods and/or services to customers on-site, generally for end use personal, business or household consumption. A reasonable amount of storage of said goods on the premises shall also be assumed an integral part of retail use.

Sign

Shall mean and include any permanent or temporary structure, device, letter, word, model, banner, pennant, insignia, trade flag, or representation used as, or which is in the nature of, an advertisement, announcement, or direction, or is designated to attract the eye by intermittent or repeated motion or illumination, which is on a public way or on the private property within public view of a public way, public park or reservation. Flags of the United States and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts shall not be considered signs.